

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TERESE BERCEAU

76TH DISTRICT

**Testimony of Representative Terese Berceau
Assembly Bill 892
Assembly Committee on Elections and Campaign Finance Reform
Senate Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs
March 31, 2010**

CORRECTED COPY

Thank you Chairperson Smith and Chairperson Coggs for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 892, my legislation to allow people to register to vote online.

Today, many people bank, pay their taxes, and communicate with friends, family, and colleagues via the internet. More and more newspapers are online, and people consult them for news, politics, and sports. People make many purchases online, renew their driver's licenses or other licenses, and even file legal briefs. People use the internet to access their public libraries, reserving books and movies online. Assembly Bill 892 will allow people who are eligible to vote and hold current and valid state driver's licenses or DOT identification cards to register online or make changes to their voter registrations electronically.

We have the technology to allow Wisconsin voters to register online, and it is time to initiate it. In Washington State, without any press releases or promotional materials, registrations filed in at a pace of 500 a day as soon as they turned the system on. After promoting it, online registrations tripled.

People of all age groups expect that many of their daily transactions can now be done on the internet. Computer usage is up in all age groups. Admittedly, it is used more by the young, but those are people we want to encourage to participate in their democracy, in their communities. 92% of people 18-29 use a computer, 87% of those 30-49, 79% of those 50-64, and 42% of those over 65. In particular, this bill will be of help to military personnel who are twice as likely to report registration problems as civilians. Of all people, those who serve our country should not have difficulty exercising their right to vote.

Together, I and others worked with the staff of the Government Accountability Board for more than a year to assure a system that will maintain a secure registration process and form on the Internet. GAB will be able to maintain a system that electronically verifies, instantaneously, the validity of the information submitted by cross checking it with DOT records. If there is no match with DOT's information, the applicant will not be able to use the online system to register, and will register in the same manner as today...in

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advance at the clerk's office or at the polls. The GAB will, by rule, establish the manner and method of electronic application and verification information, and will also, by rule, set the procedure and methods by which municipal clerks and boards of election commissioners maintain records of electronic registrations. The bill also requires that the GAB and DOT submit reports to the Legislature regarding the performance of the system at the end of each calendar quarter.

These electronic registrations will be more accurate, timelier, and more efficient than paper forms. Online registration will reduce the need for manual entry by Wisconsin's election administrators, and reduce typographical errors in transcribing this information. In Maricopa County, AZ, a paper registration form costs at least 83 cents to process, vs. an average of 3 cents for electronic processing. We expect to see similar savings. The bill follows the lead of nine other states and the District of Columbia that have passed laws to allow electronic registration – Arizona, California, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Arizona has had electronic registration since 2002 and 60% of registered voters use it.

AB 892 also follows all of the policies of the Help America Vote Act and has the support of the Government Accountability Board.

There are many facets of electronic voter registration that will enhance the voting experience for voters and workers. One example that has been of concern in elections is that of verification postcards. These postcards are sent out for the purpose of verifying the registrant's residency information. This will not change. The postcards will still go out, but it is expected that fewer "unable to deliver" postcards will result. And municipal clerks get so many forms that it takes some time, after the election, to get the cards out. With electronic registration, the cards can go out more promptly.

But the most important aspect of this bill is that I believe, and we believe, that it will encourage more people to register to vote and participate in our democracy. With the difficult issues we face today, and the public seemingly paying more attention to these issues than at some times in the past, the time is now for facilitating voter registration and participation.

I know there will indeed be a number of questions regarding the operation of an electronic voter registration system, and I would like others who worked on this project to help in answering your questions, in particular Nat Robinson and Shane Falk from GAB.

FRED A. RISSE
President
Wisconsin State Senate

March 31, 2010



Senator Spencer Coggs, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs
123 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear ~~Senator Coggs~~ ^{Spencer} Coggs,

Thank you Chairman Coggs for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 645 and Assembly Bill 892, companion bills authored by Rep. Terese Berceau and myself.

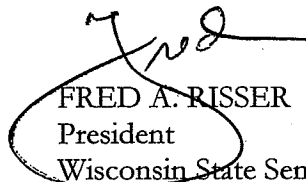
Senate Bill 645 and Assembly Bill 892 permit a qualified elector who holds a current and valid state driver's license or state-issued identification card to register to vote, or makes changes in his or her voter registration, via computer using a secure Internet site maintained by the Government Accountability Board (GAB). The information is then immediately matched with data from the Department of Transportation. If a registrant's information does not match, the application cannot be completed and must be submitted manually.

Arizona, Oregon, Washington and Kansas have successfully implemented online registration and four other states have passed legislation to do so. Registrations submitted online are more complete and accurate and will reduce the workload for election administrators who will have fewer manual forms to process.

Civic participation in the election process is a valuable and important part of our democracy and I believe that government should work to find even better ways to strengthen and improve our election procedures. There is no doubt that people's lives have become increasingly busy and complicated. Offering our constituents and voters the option of registering to vote online is a service that they will value and appreciate.

I appreciate your willingness to schedule these measures for a public hearing and I encourage the committee to look favorably upon this important legislation.

Most sincerely,


FRED A. RISSE
President
Wisconsin State Senate

FAR:tet

Cc: Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs

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JUDGE WILLIAM EICH
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JOINT COMMITTEE HEARING

2009 Senate Bill 645 and 2009 Assembly Bill 892

**Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs
Assembly Committee on Elections and Campaign Reform**

Testimony of Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel
Government Accountability Board
March 31, 2010

Chairperson Coggs, Chairperson Smith, Senate and Assembly Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony with respect to 2009 Senate Bill 645 and 2009 Assembly Bill 892 on behalf of the Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.). The agency supports this proposed legislation. Electronic registration is a part of the G.A.B.'s Legislatively-approved State Election Administration Plan for 2009-2014, and introduction of this legislation will put the agency well on its way to realize that objective.

The agency appreciates the opportunity to have worked with Representative Berceau regarding the technical and administrative details of this legislation. The agency also appreciates Senator Risser's contributions to this legislation.

The agency continues to study electronic registration currently offered by several states. Electronic registration in Washington and Arizona has significantly lessened the registration burden on clerks in the weeks leading up to an election, while at the same time maintained the integrity of the process by requiring verification of registrants with the department of motor vehicle database. Limiting electronic registration to persons with a driver's license or state-issued identification card provides a secure process and permits an instant verification of the authenticity of the registration. This legislation properly strikes the balance between elector accessibility and integrity of the electoral process.

A common thread among states with true electronic registration is the compatibility of the registration and motor vehicle databases. Hurdles may need to be overcome in creating an application for electronic registration. This legislation provides sufficient flexibility for the agency to implement electronic registration in cooperation with the Department of Transportation.

We believe the legislation continues Wisconsin's commitment to accessible elections, while also preserving the integrity of the registration and election process. This in turn will maintain the highest degree of confidence in our electoral system by all participants in the electoral process.

Conclusion

Thank you for having considered and incorporated many of our recommendations regarding this legislation. Most importantly, thank you for advancing electronic registration, which is a part of the G.A.B.'s State Election Administration Plan for 2009-2014. The Government Accountability Board staff is available to answer any questions or provide further assistance during consideration of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

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Fair Elections Wisconsin

Online Voter Registration Would Help Clerks and Voters – Bills AB-892 and SB-645

Benefits for voters

Voters benefit from a more timely, accessible and reliable way to register, with immediate confirmation of registration. This eliminates worries about being told at the polls, "You are not on the list"—a frequent consequence of paper forms that are entered late, or with errors.

Follow the successful model of other states

Arizona, Washington, Kansas, and Oregon have successfully instituted online voter registration by partially integrating it with the driver's license system. Arizona's system has been in place since 2002, and in 2008, 60% of those who registered successfully used the online system. Washington's system has been in effect since 2008, and is highly acclaimed by their Secretary of State. Four other states have passed legislation and expect to have a system running in mid-2010. In order to maintain the integrity of the voter list, there are these restrictions, which are also in AB-892:

- Only those with a driver's license or state identification card can use the online system.
- The bill requires immediate matching with data from the DOT. If the applicant does not match, they will not be able to complete the application. If they cannot match, other states direct them to print out a paper form and mail it in.

Cost-effective

From a report from PEW Center on the States, August 2009:

"In Maricopa County, Arizona, a paper registration form costs at least 83 cents to process, versus an average of 3 cents for a registration completed online."

The Secretary of State from Washington estimates that during the first 10 months of operation, the system paid back in savings 30% of the cost of implementation.

Benefits for election administrators

The data submitted online is more complete and accurate than on paper forms. Online registration significantly reduces the costly and heavy workload of entering data from paper forms, most of which are received when other election tasks are mounting. In 2008, clerks struggled to process forms in time to get voters on the poll list. If the bulk of registrations are handled automatically, our election administrators will be able to deal promptly with the paper forms from other voters.

Online registration is included in Wisconsin's Election Plan

Online voter registration is included in the 5-year plan as approved by the Government Accountability Board, and approved by the Joint Committee on Finance. The plan was sent to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, and published in the Federal Register.

Government services online

Our government agencies have experience with online systems. GAB has a secure site, voter Public Access, where voters can check their registration, their polling place, and who is on the ballot. The DOT has a secure site where you can change your address and perform six other functions regarding your driver's license. You can apply for social security, or register for the Selective Service, or send in your tax forms online. Government has no choice but to become more efficient by instituting online resources.

Paul Malischke is a spokesperson for Fair Elections Wisconsin malischke@yahoo.com 3/31/10

Fair Elections Wisconsin is an independent all-volunteer organization
working for elections that are accurate, well administered, and transparent.
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